

## Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

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### **Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students: Flexible Approaches in an Era of New Standards**

Edited by Patrick Proctor, Alison Boardman, and Elfrieda Hiebert

New York: Guildford, 2016, 246 pages

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This highly accessible edited volume provides an introduction to an array of innovative programs and pedagogies designed to meet the educational needs of a rapidly growing and changing emergent bilingual (EB) learner population. *Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students* challenges the monolingual and monocultural focus of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and demonstrates how research-based practices, when implemented in linguistically and culturally responsive ways, can facilitate EBs' simultaneous acquisition of academic language and content knowledge. Although each of the practices and models presented in the book specifically address how they support EBs' development with respect to meeting the requirements of the CCSS, their relevance extends well beyond the context of those states and schools that have adopted these educational standards.

The volume's twelve chapters are divided into three major parts: policy, pedagogy, and professional learning. In the opening chapter of Part 1, Lopez provides a brief

overview of the major language education policies affecting English language learners over the past six decades, describes the types of language instruction they are commonly offered, and calls for revisions to the CCSS to integrate more “asset-based practices” (p. 14). In Chapter 2, Escamilla and Hopewell describe who EB learners are and what changes in language learning environments have occurred in this population over time, ultimately highlighting the need for educators to differentiate instruction based on students’ individual language needs. They argue that students’ English language acquisition can be accelerated when biliteracy is supported, and offer specific examples of instructional units that have achieved that aim. Rounding out the issue of policy, Eppolito and Schwarz build on the notion of differentiation through their discussion of response to intervention (RTI), a multi-tiered instructional and assessment model. They describe how it could not only shield EBs from being incorrectly identified for special education services, but also provide them more targeted language support to ensure they receive equal access to the mainstream curriculum.

Part 2, which is the most substantial of the three sections, begins with a chapter by Hiebert in which she demonstrates how many English language acquisition textbooks, which are often used as curricular guides for this population of learners, systematically fail to support a research-based approach to language and literacy development. By documenting this discrepancy, she also situates the need for interventions such as those found in the remaining six chapters of Part 2. While each chapter focuses on a unique aspect of language and literacy development related to a particular educational context, they all take the long view of improving learners’ ability to read and comprehend academic texts. For example, in Chapter 5, Crosson outlines specific instructional principles that can aid learners to develop deep, flexible knowledge of academic vocabulary in order to target specific grade-level CCSS literacy standards. Similarly, in Chapter 7, a team of Boston-based authors, including Proctor, describe how dialogic reasoning, or student-led text-based talk, provides meaningful opportunities for students to engage in authentic communication, which can increase language proficiency, foster reasoning skills, and improve literacy outcomes. Of particular note in this section is Boardman and Lasser’s depiction of how Collaborative Strategic Reading, a comprehensive model that integrates cooperative learning and explicit reading strategy instruction throughout the curricula, can lead to greater reading comprehension while concurrently supporting language

acquisition and content learning. Also highlighting the importance of cross-curricular and collaborative approaches to language and literacy development, in Chapter 10, Bravo specifically draws the reader's attention to the overlap of strategies (i.e. making inferences, posing questions, making predictions, etc.) that are equally employed in both scientific inquiry and in reading comprehension. Finally, in Part 3 there are two chapters devoted to the design and content of specific professional development programs that serve as models for best practices in supporting pre-service and in-service teachers that work with EBs.

Teaching Emergent Bilingual Students contributes to the growing international discourse on the marginalizing effects of monolingual educational language policies and common standards on linguistically othered populations. Its chapters are concise, thoroughly researched, consistently framed, and provide readers with concrete examples of how various language-as-resource (Ruiz, 1984) practices could be incorporated into classroom instruction. This practical approach to the topic of teaching EBs could provide the impetus for teachers, administrators, and professional development providers alike to take advantage of the ideological and implementational spaces (Hornberger, 2009) afforded by policies such as *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), and exert agency to meet the specific educational needs of these learners (Johnson, 2013). Although the authors sufficiently underscore how the various models and practices can both support EBs' language and literacy development and facilitate greater achievement of the academic standards, they pay little attention to the potential, positive impact that these approaches could have on other aspects of learners' identity or social status, for example. Additionally, the volume's cohesion and organizational structure could benefit from including an introduction to each of the three parts, perhaps written by the editors, to frame the subsequent chapters more thoroughly, demonstrate their interrelatedness, and situate the knowledge gap that they fill. Finally, it seemed that the book was lacking an additional resources section, which could point readers to further reading, or other materials that may be useful for implementing any of the featured practices or models.

Largely, this is a very well crafted edited volume that successfully achieves its stated aim of serving "as a starting point [for educators] to generate new ideas and approaches to designing learning environments that provide emergent bilingual children and youth with instruction that is engaging, challenging, and culturally relevant across myriad educational settings" (p. xvi).

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### *References*

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